Introduction

Cressida Campbell is a Sydney based artist working in the printmaking medium. This exhibition is a comprehensive survey of her woodblock painting from 1984 to 2008, a period spanning 25 years. Her work is based on observation as is evident in her subject matter which includes still life, landscapes and domestic interiors. Cressida Campbell is a private person, however she grew up in the public eye as her father Ross Campbell was a famous writer for the Bulletin and the Australian Woman’s Weekly. Her printmaking technique is innovative and drawing and painting are important aspects to her art making. The work shares similarities with Japanese prints in her use of colour, shadows and graphic precision. The artist’s print making process results in two finished works rather than the customary multiple prints. The finished works are one print and the woodblock from which she has produced. Since 1987 her prints have been made in editions of one.


Technique

The artist creates a composition which is drawn from life directly onto a plywood block using a linear drawing technique. The line drawing is then precisely carved out of the wood block using an engraving tool. The block is lightly sanded by hand, removing the pencil lines from the surface of the block. The colouring of the block takes place on an easel in her studio. Campbell uses watercolour paint which is densely applied to the surface of the block with a fine brush in two separate coats and the process can take from one week to two months to complete. The dry block is placed flat and then lightly sprayed with water before a piece of paper moistened with a sponge is placed on top of the block. A lino roller is used to apply pressure to the back of the Dutch Etching paper and the moistened paint transfers onto the paper to create a print. This process of printing onto paper reveals an image that is the reverse of the woodblock print. The mottled surface of her prints is the result of the spraying of the painted woodblock to subtly reveal the colour over a period of time. The resulting woodblock itself also becomes an artwork and the two complete works are exhibited together.

Still Life

Campbell’s imagery seems familiar to the viewer as it consists of recognisable objects from everyday life such as fruit, tableware, flowers and patterned textiles. This genre is referred to as still life. There is a long tradition of still life themes in art. The term refers to the depiction of inanimate objects which have usually been placed carefully together.

Landscape

Campbell’s landscape or bush compositions possess a harmonious colour palette complimented with a thoughtful use of pattern, texture and shadow. The landscapes depict distinctive Australian flora from the countryside around her home city of Sydney.

Japanese Ukiyo-e Prints

Campbell has an affinity with woodblock printing and in 1980 studied at the Yoshida Hanga Academy in Tokyo, Japan. She developed a new way of printing from a woodblock which incorporates a combination of painting and printmaking. Her unique style of printing is reminiscent of the Japanese art of *ukiyo-e*. Ukiyo-e, which translates to ‘pictures of the floating world’ is a genre of woodblock printing and painting which was produced between the 17th and 20th centuries originating in the metropolitan culture of Edo (Tokyo). This style featured motifs of city life, in particular, scenes from everyday life in the entertainment district. Later imagery focused on landscapes inspired by the traditional Japanese love of nature. Ukiyo-e artists have had a great impact on the landscape painting genre internationally.

Domestic Interiors

Cressida Campbell’s compositions of domestic interiors transform common everyday objects into environments of great beauty. The elements of colour, texture and composition are dominant in these works.
# ACTIVITIES

## Knowledge and Understanding

+ What are the main subjects in Cressida Campbell’s artwork?  
+ Describe the process that the artist uses to create her prints. How is this different to most artworks in the printmaking medium?

### Creating

Students produce a lino cut print of a still life. Construct a still life in the classroom and have students make several drawings in pencil. Have them choose their best composition to be transferred onto lino and printed onto paper using a similar printmaking process and Cressida Campbell.

### Presenting

In groups students spend time constructing a still life on a specific theme. Give each group the opportunity to select, arrange and light the object. Have them make drawings of their arrangements using different colour schemes and techniques.

### Responding

+ What is a still life?  
+ Why would artists want to paint a still life?  
+ What kinds of objects might be included in a still life?  
+ How can an artist organise a Still Life to prevent it from being chaotic?

### Reflecting

What items and areas of your environment are important to you? What would you include in a still life picture to illustrate the environment around you?

## References

### Further Reading


### Online Resources

[www.cressidacampbell.com](http://www.cressidacampbell.com)  

## Education Kit compiled by Maree Purnell (Public Programs Intern, QUT Art Museum 2009)


### Timeless: The Art of Cressida Campbell

5 March - 19 April  
FREE ENTRY

**QUT Art Museum**  
2 George Street (next to City Botanic Gardens)  
Brisbane Q 4000  
07 3138 5370  
artmuseum@qut.com

QUT Art Museum is proudly supported by  
[Conrad Gargett](http://www.conradgargett.com)  
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**Supported by Ovation**

**OPENING HOURS**  
Tuesday - Friday 10am - 5pm  
Wednesday 10am - 8pm  
Saturday and Sunday 12pm-4pm
STUDENT WORKSHEET
Stages of Cressida Campbell’s printmaking process

The woodblock is lightly sanded by hand removing the pencil lines from the surface of the block.

The woodblock itself also becomes an artwork and the two complete works are exhibited together.

Watercolour paint is densely applied to the surface of the block with a fine brush in two separate coats.

A composition is drawn directly onto a plywood block using a linear drawing technique.

An image that is the reverse of the woodblock print appears on the paper.

The line drawing is precisely carved out of the wood block using an engraving tool.

The dry block is placed flat and lightly sprayed with water.

Rearrange the steps so that they describe the printmaking process in the correct order. Number the steps from 1 to 7.